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HARDING
UNIVERSITY

Leaving a year of grief

AUDREY JACKSON
head photographer

Five hundred and thirty-eight thousand, two hundred and forty-four people have died in the last year from COVID-19 in the United States according to the World Health Organization as of March 24. Five thousand, five hundred and forty-seven; that is the number of COVID-19-related deaths reported by the Arkansas Department of Health. White County contributed 115 of those deaths. To better empathize with the losses COVID-19 has caused, a member of The Bison staff spoke with two faculty members about their experience with grief and the death of family members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Harding University announced on March 12, 2020, that the campus would close and classes would transition online until further notice after the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case in Arkansas. Dr. Byron Howell, assistant professor of graduate business administration, recalled how temporary the initial announcement felt. He expected things to be OK after a month or two.

"At the time, it seemed like such a short-term thing that we could get over the hump on," Howell said.

Howell and his spouse strictly followed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidelines. Grocery pickup became their norm. Restaurant takeout broke up the monotony of home-cooked meals. Then in the fall, Howell's mother and brother both died of COVID-related complications.

Ruth Howell, Byron Howell's 96-year-old mother, contracted the coronavirus while living with family members in Millington, Tennessee. After her hospitalization, one of Byron's nephews was allowed to visit her and facilitate a video call before she died on Aug. 19, 2020. The family scrambled to notify everyone they could to join the call.

"It's not the same as giving a hug," Howell said.

The Howell family opted for a graveside memorial service since they were unable to have a funeral service. Howell and his spouse traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, in their RV and parked near the grave to watch the livestream, avoiding exposure to family who had recently had COVID-19. Howell took a picture of the pallbearers carrying the casket to the grave and showed it to his class the next day.

"This thing is real, you know," Howell said to the students. "You may feel sort of bulletproof because you're young and, fortunately, it doesn't have such an impact on young people, but it does on your grandparents and parents."

Howell's 76-year-old brother, Bruce Howell, died four months later on Dec. 31 from COVID-related pneumonia, which he contracted while living in a nursing home. Howell said the family has planned a reunion for Oct. 12, 2021, his mother's birthday, to celebrate the memories of his mother and brother. The grief has permeated his life through habits and small reminders, Howell said. He found himself reaching for the phone to call his mother for weeks and months after her death, wanting to share prayer requests and events from his day.

"Then you realize that you just can't pick up the phone and call her," Howell said.

Greg Clayton, associate professor of art and design, experienced a similar loss because of the pandemic. He and his spouse chose to observe the recommended COVID-19 guidelines by limiting their grocery trips, wearing masks and social distancing while seeing friends. He only visited his parents, Jesse and Andrea Clayton, in Nashville, Tennessee, at the beginning of Harding's spring break in 2020. It was the last time he saw his 84-year-old mother in person.

Clayton said during the year, his parents were reluctant to discuss any information regarding COVID-19 because of political differences about how to respond to the pandemic. His mother eventually told Clayton and his three siblings that she had been tested for COVID-19 in November 2020.

The response, he said, was a shock. The family wrestled with how to respond and intervene from a distance. How could they motivate their mother to get care when she saw herself as a fairly strong, independent woman?

"There's a certain ego sacrifice involved in giving up and going to the ER, and some of us resist getting healthcare — myself included," Clayton said. "Though she was much more willing to get healthcare generally, the politics of COVID had complicated the willingness to admit she needed that kind of care."

After considering several options — calling an ambulance or having someone drive them to the hospital — Clayton's brother, who lived near their parents, drove over to check on them and, ultimately, took their mother to the emergency room. Within two weeks, their mother had died. While the hospital only allowed two siblings to be with their mother when she died, Clayton was able to be present remotely.

"The only way I visited mom was a phone call," Clayton said. "There were some options for a video call, but she was a Southern lady, and showing herself all wired up and tubed up with a ventilator was something she didn't want, so we only had a couple phone calls."

Clayton's father, Jesse, died 12 days after his wife. Though his father's health had been declining slowly since a stroke five years prior, the family believed that a mild case of COVID-19 and the loss of his wife contributed to his death.

Clayton said the shock the family experienced was indescribable. His parents went from living alone and being self-sufficient to gone within a month. Rarely does a week pass without two or three reminders of their deaths, Clayton said.

Both professors spoke of the importance of speaking to others who shared their experience and relying on their faith while processing their grief. Clayton said it was important to understand that grief is not always visible, and people should treat others with patience. Grace was an important aspect of supporting others in their grief, Clayton said.

"Wherever I am on a given day, I will do what I can for others, but there is also a need that you allow me to be where I am at, in what I am in, focused on what I am focused on, and have that element of practical grace," Clayton said.

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them, and we want to try to do as much as we can financially to make up for that."

This is the first time a fall or spring international program has been sent home early. In summer 2005, a College of Business Administration group to England ended prematurely due to labings in London.

"No one is eager to send students home when this is something they've been looking forward to and saving for, and so it's definitely a decision that was made lightly," Pleasant says. "I'm just thankful for the patience and support that everyone has shown. I know that there's a lot of disappointment right now. We're disappointed too, but everyone has just been so lovely."

asant said it is too early to make a decision on other international programs. IP had already made the decision to cancel the India trip of the fall 2020 Harding University in Asia (HUA) trip earlier this year due to COVID-19 reasons. No other changes have been made for HUA yet. Both Harding University's international campuses in Latin America and Asia are presently being monitored with no plans for cancellation.

g fall 2020



Photo by **ELENA FENNE**

shman Claire Cunningham and sophomore Grace Kenton sit with friends in Kendall Hall lobby. Students returned last week Kendall would not be used for housing in fall 2020.

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in classes over the last three years. One day after a different campuswide survey from the office of the president stated that key enrollment indicators were up in 2020. The perceived contradiction left some students feeling confused.

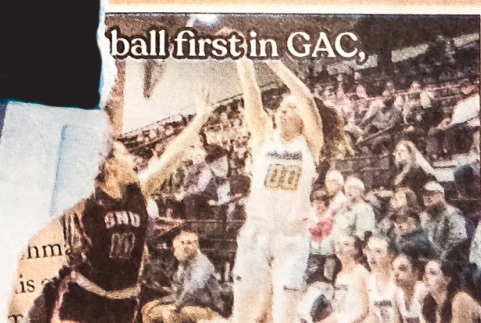
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*Special Edition: Reflecting on one
year living through COVID-19*

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‘The hope is we will develop some resiliency’

COVID-19, isolation affect nation’s mental health

MADISON SCOTT
editor-in-chief

Research suggests that COVID-19 and its effects continue to affect Americans’ mental health: More than 42% of people surveyed by the U.S. Census Bureau in December 2020 reported symptoms of anxiety or depression — an increase from 11% the previous year.

According to Dr. Travis McNeal, associate professor of behavioral sciences, recent surveys have revealed an increase in anxiety and fearfulness, sleep disturbance, substance abuse and suicidality. Additionally, McNeal said when looking back at more recent, similar health crises such as the SARS outbreak of 2002, many people took on symptoms that mimicked those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“PTSD is when you have a traumatic event and then the repercussions of that event stay with the person even whenever it’s over,” McNeal said. “That’s what we saw in prior pandemics: They got afraid to get engaged in life because they thought, ‘Maybe this is gonna happen again,’ so they [withdrew and experienced] negative emotions ... So we’re going to see some people on the backside of [the COVID-19 pandemic] that look a bit like they have PTSD.”

Dr. Lew Moore, chairman of the marriage and family therapy program and director of the counseling center, said that much of the problems arising point to how people were made, including their neurobiology of needing to be around other people and have social circuitry.

“The fascinating thing about us is we can have a difficult day ... and we can encounter a friend, and they can give us a hug or a kind word and we can calm down — it has that

effect on us,” Moore said. “So I am most concerned about the isolation piece.”

Dr. Steven Choate, associate professor of art and design, said he remembers the exact moment when he received news in March 2020 that Harding would not be returning to school. It was the Thursday of spring break, Choate said, and he was driving in Searcy with his son.

“Few pieces of correspondence of a general nature have hit me like that,” Choate said.

work — something Choate said helps ease negative emotions for him.

“I would come in and spend the whole day [in my office], and if you saw one or two people out on the front lawn, that was it,” Choate said. “My colleague — Greg Clayton, next door — he came in pretty much throughout all of that, and that was wonderful because there were times when I felt like I was on the moon. It was so quiet and so lonely, and I wouldn’t go back and

There are a number of outside stressors, Moore said, but COVID-19 could be the primary stressor.

“The hope is we will develop some resiliency,” McNeal said. “Even if we get to [the] worst-case scenario, we now feel like we can conquer it: If we have to isolate, if we have to social distance, if we have to mask, we can do that for a while and then conquer whatever the challenge is and come out on the other side.”

Moore said when people are able to interact with others, it contributes to their worldview and allows them to gain different perspectives and understandings of what is happening around them. He said his advice for people to be able to engage in this kind of interaction and stay away from anxious thinking patterns would be to stay connected and communicate with some regularity. Moore said it is important for people to refrain from retreating into themselves during challenging times such as these. On the other side of the spectrum, Moore said it is also crucial for people to check in on friends and family, especially those who are distressed. Checking on people takes on a whole new meaning now, Moore said.

“For me at least ... when I’m in the wilderness experience, all I can think about is my immediate fears and failings and hopes and concerns,” Choate said. “It’s only after I get through that, that I have the perspective of hindsight, and I can see how God’s strong hand was with me and has helped me.”

The University counseling center is available for in-person and virtual sessions. They may be contacted at 501-279-4347 or counseling@harding.edu.



Graphic by AUDREY JACKSON

“I don’t want to take it to an extreme ... but it was sobering and, for me, a little frightening.”

Choate said he has dealt with depression on and off throughout his life and had other pre-existing circumstances and factors that made living through COVID-19 challenging.

Choate said to help him work through the circumstances he would send emails to students, letting them know he was there for them. Additionally, he would go into his office nearly every day to focus and

relieve those months for anything.”

Choate said that while he is naturally introverted and more reserved, this experience taught him how much he needs people.

“We’re inherently very social beings,” McNeal said. “We want to connect with others. We were made to connect with others, and so isolation is incredibly harmful.”

Moore said the volume of people visiting the counseling center has increased this year. He said he could not say for sure all the exact causes of and correlations with this.

Arkansas announces phase 1C for COVID-19 vaccines

EMMA JONES
news editor

The Arkansas Department of Health recently opened phase 1C of the COVID-19 vaccination plan, which allows many college students to be vaccinated.

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson announced the phase opening on March 16 and said that it includes the vaccination of anyone in the state who lives in student housing. Dr. Julie Hixson-Wallace, the vice president for accreditation and institutional effectiveness and associate provost, has helped organize Harding’s vaccine clinics, and in an

email to the student body, said the University plans to hold clinics for students on campus on March 31 and April 1.

Since the Pfizer vaccine was introduced on Dec. 14, 2020, and the Moderna vaccine on Dec. 21, the country has faced a long journey of distributing the vaccines and determining who is eligible to receive them. Harding held the first on-campus vaccine clinic on Jan. 18, administering Pfizer shots to employees who were 65 or older. Another was held on Feb. 20 and 21 to administer the second dose of the vaccine to that group. The clinics have been run mainly by faculty, staff and students from the College of Pharmacy, Carr College of Nursing and the College of Allied Health.

“[The clinics] have been additional work for sure, but very rewarding,” Dr. Jeanie Smith, assistant dean for pharmacy student affairs and admissions, said. “We’ve had faculty and students from almost every center for health science programs on campus pitch in and volunteer, so it’s been a great collaborative interprofessional experience.”

According to Hixson-Wallace, as of March 18, 549 people have received at least one dose of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine through Harding coordinated clinics, and 1,055 total doses of the Pfizer vaccine have been administered on campus. Medic Sav-On Drugs administered 226 doses of the Pfizer vaccine in cooperation with the Carr College of Nursing, and 236 doses of

the Moderna vaccine were administered by Stotts Drug Co. in cooperation with the College of Pharmacy.

With phase 1C opening, vaccine clinics have taken place in Searcy with college students in mind. Unity Health Hospital held clinics at Fellowship Bible Church on March 17, 18 and 23 that were targeted toward the Harding student body. According to Dr. Roddy Lochala, the chief medical officer at Unity Health, about 4,300 doses of the vaccine were administered through these clinics. Senior Lucas Lawrence went to the clinic hosted at Fellowship to get his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

“I wanted to get vaccinated to protect myself and to ultimately protect others,” Lawrence said. “I didn’t experience any negative side effects from the shot besides being a little sore, which is to be expected with any shot. [At the clinic], the staff was very nice and helpful. When I went, it was busy, but the wait time wasn’t bad.”

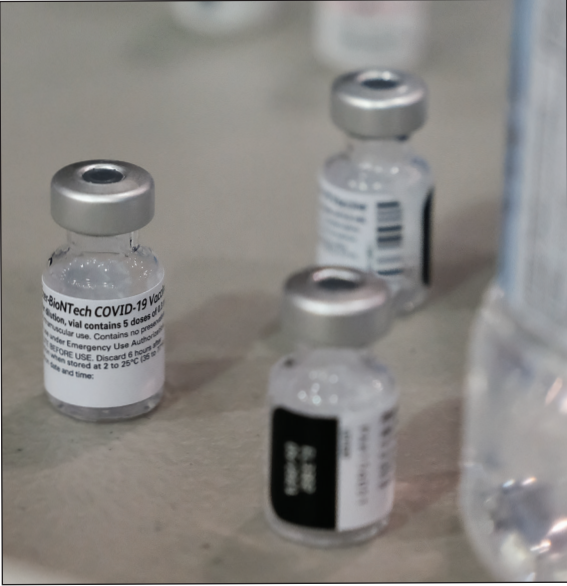
In a series of polls conducted via the Student Publications Instagram account, 60% of respondents said that they had been vaccinated. Of those, 76% said they received the Pfizer vaccine, while 24% said they received the Moderna vaccine. Seventeen percent said they were vaccinated on campus, versus 83% who reported being vaccinated off campus. Of those who have not yet been vaccinated, 61% said they plan to eventually do so.

Though phase 1C opened vaccine eligibility to most college students living on campus, a few have already been fully vaccinated. Under phase 1A, students in the health sciences programs were able to receive the vaccine due to their close work with Unity Health, as well as other medical clinics in the region. Junior nursing major Jared Bresko got his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine at the end of January and his second in mid-February through a clinic conducted by the Carr College of Nursing.

“COVID-19 has deeply impacted the clinical experience for nursing majors, as many hospitals closed their doors last year to students,” Bresko said. “Due to the vaccine ... we now feel much more comfortable and confident when caring for our patients.”

Regarding the potential vaccine clinics to be held later in the semester for students living in on-campus housing, Smith said the most helpful thing students can do is pay attention to their Harding emails.

“Whenever we get to the point where we’ll be able to plan more details for a clinic, we will need to know if there’s going to be 20 students or 200 students [who] show up so we can plan appropriately,” Smith said. “I want to encourage students to keep an eye on their email and to respond in a timely manner so that we can plan for things like vaccine supply.”



Photos by AUDREY JACKSON

Pharmacy faculty members draw and administer COVID-19 vaccines at clinics hosted at Harding University. After vaccinations were opened to group 1C, roughly 4,300 doses were administered through three clinics at Fellowship Bible Church on March 17, 18 and 23.

Arkansas moves away from mask mandate

GABRIEL HUFF
asst. news editor

Governor Asa Hutchinson said Sunday, March 21, that Arkansas’ mask mandate is expected to be removed at the end of March.

Hutchinson made the comment during CNN’s “State of the Union” program. If the mandate is removed, Arkansas areas will become mask-optional for the first time since July 2020, when Hutchinson instated the directive. However, such actions will not remove mask guidelines.

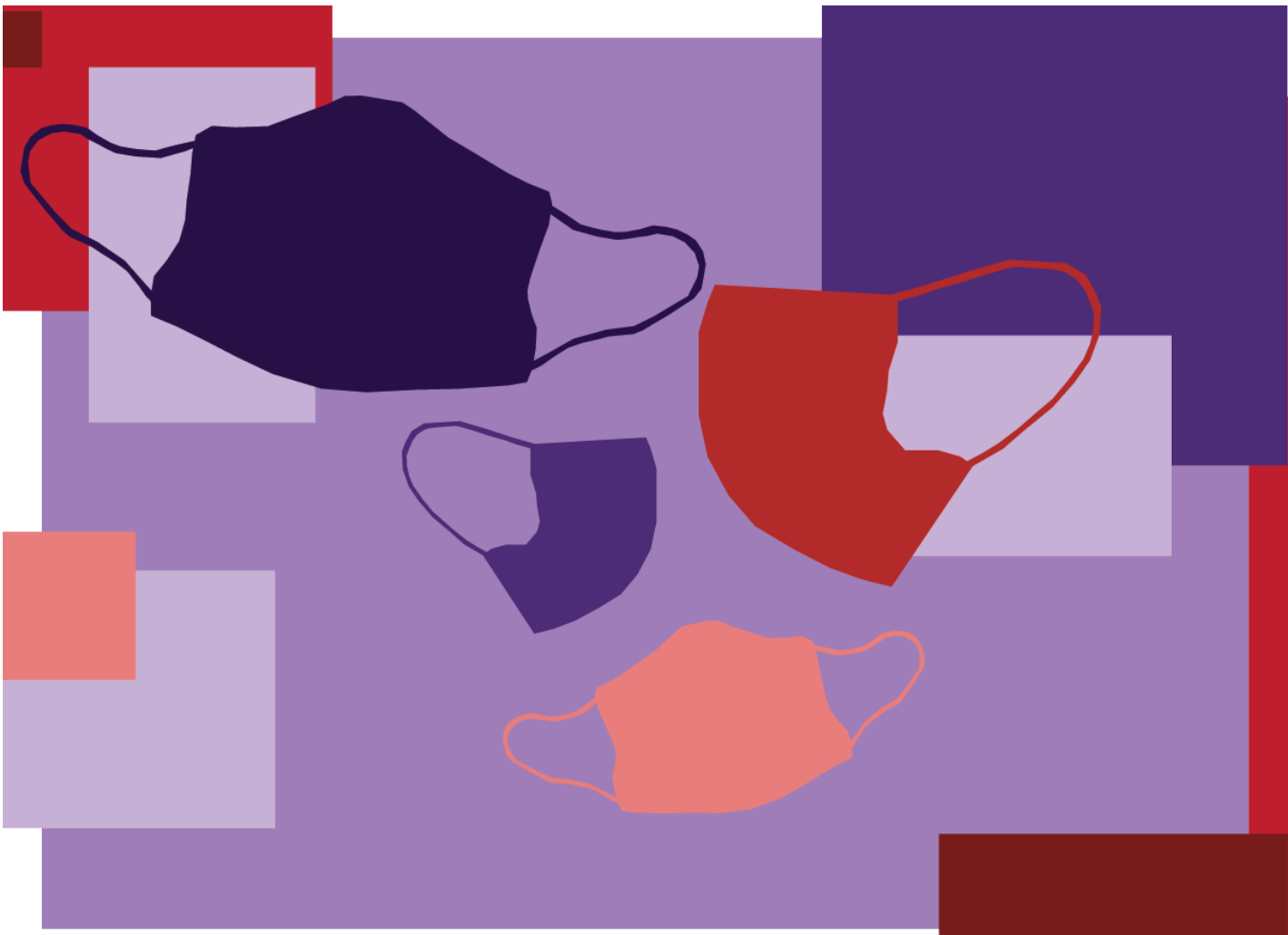
“I set some goals,” Hutchinson said, according to The Associated Press. “And we’re making those goals. So, I expect that [mandate] to be lifted. Common sense is going to replace mandates.”

Harding Executive Vice President David Collins, chair of the on-campus COVID-19 task force, said he could not say whether Harding would remove mask requirements if Arkansas’ mandate was removed at the end of the month. Collins said the decision would depend on the University’s situation at the time of the mask mandate’s removal, among other factors.

“We will be watching our numbers in isolation and in quarantine, watching for any upward trends in those numbers that might emerge and considering the wide-ranging viewpoints of employees, students and parents,” Collins said.

Collins said Harding has tried to accomplish two primary goals: keep the campus healthy and limit the disruption of classes and campus activities, looking to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other institutions for guidance in decision making.

“We will take the guidances that we receive, the changes that come our way from the CDC and the Arkansas Department of Health, and continue to try to achieve our primary goals,” Collins said. “That’s a process of understanding the information that is coming our direction but also really considering our own circumstances here and how we can perhaps loosen up — but at the same time, be very careful about that, so we do not take steps that are going to get in the way of



Graphic by AUDREY JACKSON

those two primary goals of health and limiting the disruptions.”

Some organizations near campus are taking similar precautions. Eric Mount, manager of Midnight Oil Coffeehouse, said the business plans to require masks regardless of whether Arkansas ends the mandate.

“We’re going to continue to follow the CDC regulations,” Mount said.

Todd Gentry, a college community outreach minister, said the Original Rock House Ministries and the Sunday student service at College Church of Christ aim to become mask-optional areas if Hutchinson removes the mandate. However, they will also attempt to mirror Harding to avoid putting students in conflicting situations.

“We’ll keep our masks on at least through the end of the school year, so we don’t put a student where they have to decide, ‘Am I going to follow Harding rules, or am I not?’” Gentry said.

Sophomore Alexa Blakenship said she believes Harding should keep the mask mandate in place until the end of the semester due to upcoming campus events.

“I think Harding will hang on to it a little longer after Arkansas releases the mask mandate, but I think that it’s about time,” Blakenship said. “I think we’re getting very close, personally.”

Toward the beginning of March, the Arkansas Democrat Gazette said several universities in the state were expected to keep

their current COVID-19 protocols, including University of Arkansas and University of Central Arkansas.

Other states such as Montana, North Dakota, Mississippi and Texas have already removed their mask mandates. Some schools in Texas have opted to maintain mask requirements. According to The Dallas Morning News, most Texas-area universities and colleges will uphold public health protocols, including Texas Christian University.

Collins said he is hoping for a normal semester in the fall at Harding.

“If we can continue to improve in our country the way we have in the last two months, then I’m very optimistic that we can be back to normal at Harding,” Collins said.

Searcy coffee shops adapt, overcome pandemic’s challenges

MORGAN GIANFERANTE
beat reporter

COVID-19 hit small businesses across the country last March, forcing many small business owners to adjust and adapt amid the pandemic — including several coffee shops in Searcy.

Mr. Postman Espresso, a hybrid coffee shop and post office, closed their indoor seating and used drive-thru service only from March 16 to May 12, 2020, when the business opened its lobby again. Many customers wanted the convenience of their daily caffeine and post office; however, the coffee shop faced the challenge of delivery delays for milk and stamps.

“We were at a lower amount of sales and had to turn people away,” Mr. Postman Espresso manager Mary Willhelm said. “But people definitely came out to support small businesses.”

One coffee shop turned to curbside service to continue business throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Rise & Grind Coffee Co., located inside the Natural Food Store on Main Street, was able to stay open because the grocery story was considered an essential business.

“The health department would come by, and a separate COVID inspector would check our space,” Rise & Grind Coffee Co. owner Lisa Douglas said. “We also had to adjust our menu to keep people coming. We couldn’t serve just coffee.”

Midnight Oil Coffeehouse reached the community of Searcy by serving customers through curbside pickup and their porch window, allowing customers a new, COVID-friendly way to place and pick up orders during the summer months.

“It was refreshing to have MO still be open because it was a part of the normalcy that was left,” senior Chantel Ceaser said. “Even though [it was] through a window, it was nice to see their faces.”

Stu’s Brew was one of the coffee shops that kept rhythms of normalcy. The coffee shop has two locations that are small shacks with drive-thru windows on either side. This allowed the baristas to continue brewing their specialty lattes and give Searcy customers the opportunity to grab their cup of coffee from a safe distance.

Another coffee shop, Savor + Sip, could not sustain its business during the pandemic. The coffee and crêperie closed its doors officially on August 30,

2020. Now, WellBar, a gym and physical fitness center, occupies the space that Savor + Sip once did in downtown Searcy. WellBar opened in December 2020 and offers bar, cycle, strength and yoga classes.

Reflecting on a year of COVID-19, the coffee shops of Searcy are able to see the benefits that arose from the challenging months.

Both Midnight Oil and Rise & Grind Coffee Co. expanded to an additional location in 2020. Customers of Rise & Grind Coffee Co. are now able to grab a cup of coffee from their Natural Food Store storefront or their new location inside Soda Jerk, while Midnight Oil customers can

purchase coffee from the new location in the Brackett Library. Additionally, Mr. Postman Espresso will be releasing an online ordering system with an app in the next few months.

“You have to keep pushing and not throw in the towel,” Douglas said. “It was totally worth it because we didn’t give up.”



Photos by CAROLINE PALMER

While some local coffee shops like Savor + Sip had to closed their doors during the pandemic, others continue to adapt and thrive. Lisa Douglas, owner of Rise & Grind Coffee Co., expanded her business to a second location inside Soda Jerk.

Church is a people, not a place

EVERETT KIRKMAN
lifestyle editor

I don't want things to go back to normal, and I don't think they should. The old "normal" was shallow, ostentatious and chauvinistic. Many of the routines I found myself in were not gratifying to me or God or anyone — they were simply tradition.

Of course, I want us all to be able to move on from the season we're in. And there truly was a lot of good in our old routines. But I want us to be able to find a new normal — as the church — but broader than that. I think something has to change for the church to survive. As the world progresses, the church will change, too, whether we accept it or not.

The church is a people, not a place. The church is not confined to a building or to a denomination. The church should not be limited to a certain number of people, or to people who look or act a certain way. Jesus did not limit his ministry to a certain group of people. He went out of his way to pay attention to and speak life into the marginalized members of his community — even people so marginalized by society that they were not even considered a part of the community.

The church we are used to has pushed people out. It has harmed the marginalized. That church has looked too much like criticism and not enough like love.

I've been in a church building less this year than I ever have before, yet I feel more confident in my faith than I ever have. This year propelled my deconstruction



and helped me realize the start of reconstruction of my personal faith. The world has seen so much hurt this year — so much heartache. And yet, through it all, there has been hope. I have seen individuals living out the gospel every day. I have seen neighbors loving neighbors. But the typical "church" I know has not led that movement. The hope that I have found has come from unexpected places.

Through being quiet and listening, I have learned more about other worldviews. Through good conversations, I have learned more about my neighbors. Through prayer and meditation on scripture, I have learned more about the God that we worship and his intricate creation.

I have been learning to abide in him — accepting blessings and taking trials day by day. I am not the one in control — none of us are — although it is easy to forget that. To truly improve, to truly move past this season we are in as a church, as a nation and as a world, I think we should go back to the basics, for so many traditions and complexities have gotten in the way of pure faith.

I have hope for the church. I want it to be better, and I truly believe it can be better. The events of the past year have been a wake-up call. To move forward, we have to be willing to work together. We need to love without bounds and extend grace to each other and to ourselves. We are called to love God, love our neighbors — all of our neighbors — and to remember to love ourselves, too. We have the Holy Spirit living in us — what are we waiting for?

Illustration by ISABELLE CUTTS

Playing to my strengths

MICHAEL CLAXTON
narrative columnist

This may be my shortest column ever. Why? Because I'm reliving something I'd rather forget.

I've sometimes heard students reflect on their emotions when they learned during last year's spring break that Harding would close because of the pandemic. Most took the news in stride but regretted missing friends and key events, especially the seniors.

As I spoke with students in my classes over the following two months, they were handling the transition to virtual learning fairly well — maybe going a little stir crazy or getting tired of drawing straws to use the internet at home — but they were dealing.

I, on the other hand, took nothing in stride. I don't care for sudden change. One of my heroes was a friend who, late in life, somewhere around 1998, finally broke down and bought a typewriter. He was not one to rush into things. I admired his approach. I still have both the wristwatch and the calculator I bought in high school.

I have especially resisted the idea of online education. I've always believed there is no substitute for a teacher and students swapping ideas in the same room. I had hoped to spend my entire career without teaching a single online class, which I felt could only ever be a pale imitation of the real thing. I still feel that way.

So when I got the same news everyone else did last March that all classes would be virtual, I maintained my outward composure. But inside I was a wreck.

Before all this happened, my long-term plan to adapt to new technology in the classroom was to make one or two tiny tweaks each semester until I could retire, and then I would sit quietly in a dimly-lit room and watch the digital world rush by.

Instead, it was as if a couple of virtual gangsters dragged me out of my tranquil world and plunged my head into a bathtub over and over until I agreed to teach online. And they gave me one week to figure out how.

My colleagues — bless them — took pity on me and showed me how to do a few basic things: record video lectures, set up quizzes in Canvas, scan class readings.

As I started filming myself — pathetically alone in my office, miles away from the students who give me energy and purpose — I decided that I might as well go for laughs. I brought props and costumes from home and tried to work something silly into each class video. I dragged fake plants from the hallways into my office. I played ukulele music and sipped Hawaiian punch in a loud shirt. I put on a green clown wig. I played with Star Wars toys and recited lines from "Hamlet." I sang under an umbrella and even ate cereal on screen. I had always wanted to become a vaudeville act. This was my chance.

Meanwhile, I may or may not have taught anything of value. But that's how I handled my foray into pandemic education. I then spent the summer sitting quietly in a dimly-lit room.

Regaining control

BISON STAFF

It would be difficult to overstate the impact that this pandemic has had on modern life, on both a micro and macro scale. Rarely does an international virus disrupt daily life as relentlessly and in as many ways as the coronavirus has, especially in recent history. From watching wedding ceremonies through a screen rather than next to a loved one, to feeling a slight sense of anxiety each time we enter a grocery store, the coronavirus pandemic has forced many changes onto our lives, and these intrusions have rarely been convenient or popular. All in all, the pandemic has taken away a sense of control from all of us.

Mandated quarantining, mask wearing and isolating, while proven to be effective mitigation measures, have largely defined what life has looked like for the past year. Understandably, these measures have been regarded with great irritation and have caused great anxiety. Our world has lived in a constant state of wondering, "What if? What now? Could this get any worse?" COVID-19 has not only infected the people who physically contracted the virus, but it has also invaded the souls of all who have experienced COVID-era worries and frustrations that take over their mental, emotional and spiritual health.

It is time to regain a sense of control over the coronavirus. No matter what it takes from us, we are still in charge and responsible for our own attitude, thoughts and actions. We can choose to adopt a defeatist mindset and let the pandemic take a greater toll on human life than is necessary, or we can recognize that we can do better than that.

First, we want to acknowledge that change changes us. These instances and experiences from the past year have taken things away from us and caused us great heartache. And while we're in a mad-dash to return to normalcy, we can't forget to stop, reflect, grieve what we lost and also recount what we have gained. We, as a world, will not come out of something like this without anything to show for it, so may we acknowledge and fight for what can be salvaged and come to terms with what may have changed permanently, and possibly for the good.

Secondly, throughout it all, we have had each other. COVID-19 cannot take these meaningful relationships from us. It may have changed how we were able to communicate with one another, it may have kept us 6 feet apart from one another, but it cannot touch those deeply rooted bonds that tie us together, unless we let it.

COVID-19 shook us, stretched us, pushed us and pulled us. It is OK to grieve the past year's occurrences — both big and small. It is OK, and likely necessary, to even grieve the things we never had or got because of the coronavirus. Let us pay tribute to those things, acknowledge how they molded us and affected us, but let us go beyond merely dwelling on things lost. We hope that we, as a University and as a world, can realize how resilient we are. We have endured a great deal and learned how to weather the weather of a tumultuous storm. May we start the process of healing and take our battered spirits to a new phase of growth. May we come to accept that which was never in our control, and take hold of what is ours to control.

Loving through the distance

RACHEL BECKHAM
asst. copy editor

I am not an extrovert. I love people, and I want to help them in any way I can, but at the end of the day, they absolutely exhaust me.

I am perfectly content to spend my nights at home crossing things off my to-do list or binge-watching whatever my latest obsession may be. Yet when the world locked its doors and I found myself trapped inside, I couldn't help but long for the presence of my dearest friends, my loving family or — in all honesty — anyone.

As people, we are meant to be in relationship with others. And as God's people, we are called to be in relationship with others. Yet over and over again in the midst of the pandemic, I found myself asking, "How can I show love to the people I can't see?"

I turned to others my age to find the answer. My Instagram feeds were filled with friends on group FaceTime



calls or having socially distanced picnics. Many told me to love others by wearing my mask and staying away. I remember participating in a drive-thru birthday celebration and being so close to my friends, yet feeling farther than ever from them.

All of this advice — keep your distance, wear your mask, don't leave the house unless absolutely necessary — led to a culmination of fear. The thought of being around people gave me great anxiety, and the very beings I was called to love suddenly seemed like the enemy.

In the midst of my own trials, I saw a similar issue reflected on a national level. People were stripped of their humanity and transformed into walking infections. Those who chose not to wear masks were selfish and ignorant, and the leaders enforcing mask mandates were destroyers of our nation's freedom. In a time of national crisis, people turned against each other instead of joining together to fight the thing attacking us all.

Recently, I have been on a Star Wars kick (I know I'm a little late to the party, but at least I finally got here). A quote from Master Yoda struck me as the perfect descriptor of what has occurred amidst the pandemic: "Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." Our fear of the coronavirus led to an anger so deep that we began to hate our fellow people.



I, too, am guilty of this. I have given rude looks to people in the grocery store or made negative assumptions about them. But this is not what we were called to do. We were called to love. In his book "Everybody Always," Bob Goff tells readers to love 30 seconds at a time. This quote has helped me grow: When I am quick to judge a stranger, I remember that they are a child of God and deserving of the same love that he showed me.

The pandemic has caused overwhelming anxiety for many people. I would argue that fear is a good thing; it protects us from things that might cause us harm. But it can also become an impediment to daily life. As we reenter the world, let us remember what we are told in 1 John 4:18: "Perfect love casts out fear." Be kind to the stranger at the store, show mercy to those around you and be patient with yourself. Love can be shown everywhere, even if it is from a distance.

Illustration by ISABELLE CUTTS

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Incoming freshman athlete returns after surviving life threatening situation

RYAN GALLAGHER
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College students experienced a sudden change of plans due to the pandemic, and for some students, that meant not being on campus for school and opting for remote classes instead. While many made that decision themselves, some did not have the option to stay on campus, including freshman Sydney Reynolds.

Reynolds planned on embarking on a new adventure at Harding University and being a part of the cross-country and track teams. However, after experiencing a life-threatening brain bleed, Reynolds spent her first semester of college — and a large portion of the COVID-19 pandemic — recovering. One positive of the pandemic was that Reynolds had the opportunity to begin her first semester at Harding online.

On June 27, 2020, Reynolds said she woke up with a strange pain in the back of her head but did not experience the pain again until July 20. While she was running, the sharp pain in her head reappeared. That day, Reynolds said she went to a clinic, and the doctor told her it was nothing more than dehydration and that everything would be OK. The following day, the pain worsened, and Reynolds went to the emergency room to find that she had a brain bleed.

“They did a scan of my head,” Reynolds said. “And [the doctors] were like, ‘So you have a brain bleed going on. This could have killed you. I don’t know why you are still alive.’”

Shortly after the visit to the emergency room, Reynolds scheduled her surgery for Aug. 27. About two days after the surgery, Reynolds was released from the hospital. The surgery did not only impair her ability to run, but it impacted her day-to-day life.

“I did classes online last semester, which was really rough because of the damage from the surgery,” Reynolds said. “I wasn’t cognitively there. When I first woke up, I couldn’t tell the difference from a circle and a square.”

Her online classes consisted of the simpler subjects to help accommodate her situation, which made it easier to manage, Reynolds said. This semester, Reynolds is on campus, attending classes and fitting in among the sea of students. While she may not know the campus and college life like other freshmen yet, Reynolds said she is glad, nonetheless, to be here.

Reynolds had her second surgery on March 4. The surgery was minor, but completed the previous surgery by adding the finishing touches.

Heading into the fall semester, freshman Kylie Phillips was planning on being Reynolds’ roommate, but — due to the unfortunate circumstances — was left with the dorm room to herself. Throughout the fall semester, the two kept in touch, which made their first time meeting each other this spring semester a unique experience.

“It was so weird,” Phillips said. “[We had] been talking so much, and seeing her for the first time was really cool. It seemed like I hadn’t seen her in a very long time, even though we had never met.”

One of the assistant track coaches, Victoria Hood, reached out to Reynolds throughout the fall semester. Despite Reynolds not being there, she was still a part of the team and a part of the Lady Bisons’ future.

“Especially when she had the big surgery, I was praying for her, and the team was praying for her,” Hood said. “That’s scary — you just want to hear from people that they’re praying for you.”

Payton Reynolds, a sophomore softball player and Sydney Reynolds’ sister, was confident in her sister’s recovery. Growing up, Payton Reynolds said she saw Sydney Reynolds’ strength through her time in cross-country, from which she gained comfort.

“[Sydney] has always been super strong,” Payton Reynolds said. “I mean obviously — she runs cross-country. She has the work ethic and everything, so I knew once [the doctors] told us that she had a chance to recover, I wasn’t really worried that she wouldn’t.”

Now that Sydney Reynolds has been back on campus and training, her presence has made an impact on her team, including junior team captain Sydney Tabor.

“Sydney never complains about [her injury], and she never works any less hard because of it,” Tabor said. “She has a whole new perspective of what she’s been given instead of what has been taken from her, and that’s just amazing and an asset to the team and this university.”

Sydney Reynolds’ teammates and coaches say that her mental toughness and positive attitude about her situation has been an inspiration and a driving force to change their own outlook on life.

“For me, I try to think of what my mindset would be, and it’s honestly been a lesson for me and inspiring to me how she’s handled it,” Hood said. “I feel like we’ve all been able to truly see her faith in God and the trust that she has.”



Photo by **NAMON POPE**

Freshman Sydney Reynolds runs at the First Security Stadium on March 24. Due to health issues, Reynolds had to learn remotely for the fall 2020 semester.



Photos by **AUDREY JACKSON** and **CAROLINE PALMER**

From left to right: Jordan West lays up a shot against Arkansas Tech in the Rhodes-Reaves Field House Jan. 25. The lady Bisons volleyball team abides by COVID-19 mask regulations while on the sidelines Jan. 26. The First Security Stadium is empty after the cancellation of Division II football.



Savant in Thought

Ryan Gallagher
Sports Editor

I remember one of the first impacts COVID-19 had on the world of sports. Jan. 25, 2020, was the day I saw the tweet. The League of Legends Pro League’s Twitter account announced that their second week of matches would be postponed until further notice. For those who know me, esports is my passion, and I sometimes ruin my sleep schedule to watch it at 3 a.m. on a school night. So this news was hard-hitting for a fan like me.

The last time I saw a live, professional sport feels like an eternity ago, and quite honestly, I do not remember what game it was. Growing up in Washington state, I would always go to the Seattle Sounders games, and the roar of their stadium is something COVID-19 has taken away. Every sports fan wants to live among the sea of fans and be drowned by the people next to them, but who knows when that will be seen again.

March 11 and 12, 2020, were not happy days in the basketball world as the NBA and the NCAA were suspended,

respectively. The NBA was able to make its return in June with an adjusted format of 22 teams and a shortened tournament. Meanwhile, March Madness was canceled in 2020, the best time for fans as they watch their “perfect bracket” get ruined in the first round. It is a tradition to make a bracket, even for me, someone who has no passion for basketball. No live sports, no March Madness: Sports were already doomed.

American football really dodged a bullet, as their season ended before the outbreak, and they had plenty of time to adjust to it. This was one of few leagues that did not get impacted during its season.

One of the strongest memories sports fanatics will have from the COVID-19 era is the bubble. If you watch sports, you know what the bubble is. To accommodate shutdowns, the leagues created either a shorter season or a tournament and commonly chose the bubble method, where all teams were sent to a location to quarantine. Once they quarantined, the teams were not to leave the bubble until the end of the tournament. During time, no fans were allowed to go to the games. This was an attempt to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 while still allowing games to take place.

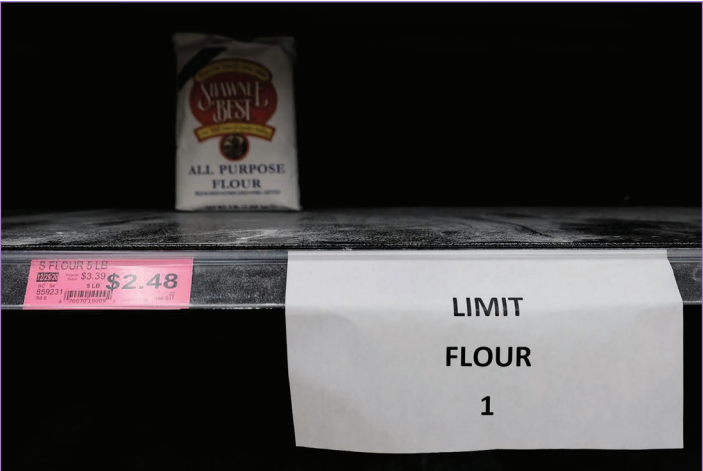
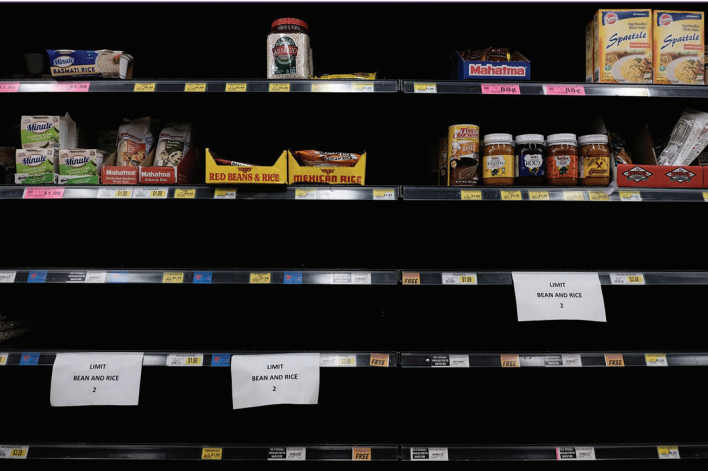
March 24, 2020, was nothing but a day of terror for sports fans. ESPN announced that the 2020 Tokyo Olympics had been postponed. This is the first time in Olympics’ history that the Olympics had been canceled or postponed for a reason other than war. The Olympics are iconic; it is a

competition among the best athletes in the world. We rarely see that happen in any sport. We wait every four years to see the World Cup. We wait every four years to see the best hockey team at the Winter Olympics. This time, we will be waiting five years for the Olympics.

COVID-19 really took a toll on the world of sports, but that does not mean it did not have its moments. Teams that won championships this past year are going down in history. The Portland Timbers won the MLS is Back Tournament and the Los Angeles Lakers won the NBA Finals, both of which took place in the bubble. On a different note, esports got to receive some praise, and they even had some games live on ESPN-2. Esports went from games on LAN and shifted to an online environment, which was a massive change.

All this to say, COVID-19 sucks, especially for sports fans, and who knows when a stadium will be at maximum capacity again. But we can hope. What sports fans learned this year is that they will always get to watch their sport because it is of such high demand — and they can thank themselves for that.

RYAN GALLAGHER is the sports editor for The Bison. He may be contacted at rgallagher1@harding.edu.



Photos by AUDREY JACKSON and NAMON POPE

From top to bottom: Grocery store shelves hold sparse items in Mountain Home, Arkansas following pandemic panic-buying on April 9, 2020. Black Lives Matter protestors gather at a rally in Nashville, Tennessee, at Legislative Plaza on May 30, 2020. In-person classes resume on the Harding University campus on Aug. 24, 2020. The Arkansas Department of Health offers free COVID-19 testing at Harding University on Oct. 20, 2020. A Harding faculty member receives the COVID-19 vaccine in the American Heritage Building on Feb. 20, 2021.

2020

January 9

January 21

February 26

March 4

March 11

March 12

March 13

March 19

March 23

March 24

March 27

April 3

May 25

June 2

June 30

August 24

September 28

October 26

October 30

November 30

December 14

December 21

2021

January 6

January 18

January 20

February 13-17

February 18

February 25

March 19

World Health Organization (WHO) declares a public health emergency over the deadly strain of coronavirus that emerged in Wuhan, China

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirms the first case of coronavirus in the United States

HUF program announces that students will be returning home due to COVID-19 concerns

Harding cancels international spring break mission trips

WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic; HUG program announces students will be returning home due to COVID-19 concerns

Harding announces that on-campus classes are suspended until further notice and tells students not to return from spring break

Trump administration declares COVID-19 a national emergency

Harding announces that the remainder of the spring semester will be conducted through online instruction. California becomes the first state to issue a stay-at-home order

Harding announces summer international programs are canceled

The 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics are suspended until 2021

Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act is approved and becomes the largest economic recovery package in history at \$2 trillion

The CDC recommends everyone wear cloth or fabric masks in public; HULA program returns to the U.S. after being isolated in Peru due to travel bans

George Floyd is killed during an arrest, sparking a wave of protests across the country and the world demanding an end to police brutality and racial injustice

Harding announces their plans for students to return in person for the fall 2020 semester

International Programs announces that all fall 2020 programs are canceled

Harding students resume fall classes on campus to start the fall 2020 semester

Global COVID-19 death toll passes 1 million people

International Programs announces that all spring 2021 programs are canceled

Harding Board of Trustees announces President Bruce McLarty's retirement

McLarty retires as University President, and David Burks begins as interim president

The first Americans get vaccinated after the FDA authorizes the Pfizer shot; U.S. electoral college confirms Joe Biden as president-elect

Moderna vaccine is distributed after being authorized by FDA

Rioters storm the United States Capitol, forcing Congress to evacuate

Harding holds its first on-campus vaccine clinic

Joe Biden is inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States

A major winter storm hits the United States and causes over nine million power outages

NASA's Perseverance rover lands on Mars

Global COVID-19 death toll passes 2.5 million people

One year passes since Harding announced that the remainder of the 2020 spring semester would be conducted through online instruction

Social interactions hindered by masks

GABRIEL HUFF
asst. news editor

About a year ago, masks were an uncommon accessory in many parts of society. However, they became the norm around the world and impacted in-person and interpersonal communication as a result of the pandemic.

Dr. Pat Garner, professor of communication, said masks have served as a hindrance to communication, concealing important parts of the face people use to help understand one another.

“When two people are communicating with each other, they are imitating each other’s behavior on a subconscious level,” Garner said. “This is because we have mirror neurons, which enable us to mirror other people’s behavior. The effect of that is that it makes our communication more effective. It bonds us to other people more ... In order to imitate someone, you have to see.”

Gamer said the most difficult problems people face when communicating with masks are understanding what people are saying, knowing how they are feeling and recognizing a new person without a mask. They also hide smiles, which are one of the primary means of communication for women, even more so than men, Garner said.

Junior Sydney Bryant said the lack of ability to communicate facial expressions is the most difficult part about wearing a mask, also noting that face coverings sometimes necessitate repetition of words, which can become exhausting.

“I have a nice smile — I’ve been told,” Bryant said. “You can smile at people and be friendly, and now whenever you’re passing somebody you can’t even smile at them. They can’t tell you’re smiling at them. It just looks like you’re squinting at them. I think that’s been one of the more difficult things for me: not being able to smile.”

In a Dec. 9, 2020, research publication, the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) said the middle

and lower face are seen as very influential in emotional recognition. Since masks cover these sections, people will tend to shift more of their focus to the eyes, the NCBI said.

Despite the challenges masks produce, Garner said people can overcome them, noting that the most common method people use to compensate for masks is entering situations in which mask removal is possible, such as being with a roommate.

As a coping measure during interpersonal communication, the NCBI said people can utilize the upper face, exercise nonverbal communication, talk louder and slower in quieter settings, and face their communication partners directly along with paying them more attention.

“People can express their ideas using hand gestures to facilitate the communication process,” the NCBI said. “Nonverbal communications are essential in facilitating the communication process, have a vast influence on the social environment, and can come in

different forms, such as facial expressions, body movements and eye messages, which can support or substitute verbal communication.”

Garner said though masks and social distancing have helped people stay safe from COVID-19, they cumber social interaction.

“Social interaction is absolutely crucial to well-being, physiologically and psychologically,” Garner said. “Things that will hinder and restrict natural interaction are going to be injurious to the person. It’s psychologically and physiologically harmful.”

Masks may not be an impediment to communication much longer, as signs of society moving away from face coverings have appeared and COVID-19 numbers have decreased. Some states such as North Dakota, Iowa and Texas have already removed their mask mandates.

“I look forward to the time when we will get rid of these masks,” Garner said.

What’s something you can’t believe we did pre-pandemic?

CAROLINE BIRDWELL
head copy editor

Looking back on the past year of COVID-19, things that once seemed normal are no longer seen in the same light. Between social distancing and mask wearing, people have been inhibited from participating in events, activities and traditions that they never questioned before. On top of that, people are now more aware of the spread of germs and the various ways it can happen. To the right is a thread of things people can’t believe they did before COVID-19 put health concerns in perspective.

“It’s weird to think that it’s a tradition for people [to] blow out candles on a birthday cake since COVID. I used to not think anything of it, but now it just seems nasty.”

– Emma Kinder
freshman

“It’s weird to think about how so many people would pack into one space for concerts. I couldn’t imagine people standing that close together anymore.”

– Mary Claire Banks
junior

“I used to get gas all the time without immediately putting on hand sanitizer. I never really considered how gross that was until COVID. Our hands are so nasty all of the time, and I can’t believe we used to live in a world where hand sanitizer wasn’t an immediate go-to.”

– Alaina Abbott
sophomore

“I went with some friends to Passion Conference 2020. There were tens of thousands of us there, and when looking around the arena, I felt a sense of awe. Looking back at videos I have from the event, it all seems so surreal, especially after a year of social distancing.”

– Camden Marshall
senior

“Now that we stand so far back from one another, it’s interesting to me that we used to stand so close. We used to be so close that sometimes you could feel someone brush up against you. Now that we’re more conscious about germ spreading, it’s crazy to think people used to, quite literally, breathe down our necks.”

– Jamica Gaither
senior

“Personally, I can’t believe I dapped people up before COVID. I only do fist bumps now.”

– Adam Dawidow
sophomore

“I honestly can’t believe we touched railings on stairs. I also can’t believe we all used buffets. We all touch the same utensils and breathe over the same food? Yeah. OK.”

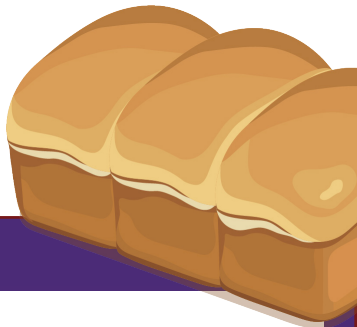
– Sydney Hammond
senior



Bingo

COVID EDITION

How many of these have you done?
Cross them out!



Bleach tie-dye	Made whipped coffee	Watched “Tiger King”	Made homemade bread	Went on a hike
Started journaling	Adopted a new pet	Picked up a new craft hobby	Went to a drive-in movie	Learned a TikTok dance
Became re-obsessed with Taylor Swift	Texted an ex	FREE MASK	Quarantined as a close contact	Started wearing loungewear every day
Cut/dyed your own hair	Impulsively shopped online	Watched “Outer Banks”	Watched “Love is Blind”	Attended a virtual concert
Got vaccinated	Read three or more new books	Hosted a drive-thru birthday party	Attended a virtual workout session	Tested positive for COVID-19



A day in the life of a float ICU nurse

Newly-hired HUF assistant director moved to New York during initial COVID-19 outbreak

KATELYN ALLEN
features editor

Ethan Brown was the newly-hired assistant director for the Harding University in Florence (HUF) program when COVID-19 broke out, which affected Italy before the United States and led to the suspension of the HUF 2020 program. Not long after the program’s suspension, Brown decided to use his nursing degree by moving to New York City and aiding the overflowing hospitals.

“New York City was the very last place on my mind,” Brown said. “But everything kept lining up perfectly for me to go there. I wanted to stay in a safe place close to home, but God had different plans for me.”

During the time between March and May of 2020, New York City was the center for the pandemic in the United States. Brown signed up for an intensive care unit nurse float position, where he was randomly assigned to hospitals that desperately needed to be staffed. He began work at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital with only one day of orientation before his shifts began, Brown said. Before COVID-19, orientation lasted several weeks so nurses could adjust to the fast-paced workflow, but the pandemic pushed every hospital’s staff to their limit.

“Each day, I would wake up around 6 a.m., walk to work and pray all the way to the hospital, asking God to just help me navigate through the day and keep my patients safe,” Brown said. “I remember having a lot of anxiety walking to work each day, not knowing what type of assignment I was going to have or even knowing where I was going to be in the hospital.”

Normally, ICU nurses would be assigned to assist one patient each day, but at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, nurses were assigned multiple COVID-positive patients. Brown managed IV blood pressure, sedation and pain medications for each patient who was medically paralyzed while on the ventilator. If a patient became unstable, he would administer proper procedure as a doctor would

stand outside of the room telling him what he needed to do. Patients would often need to be “proned,” meaning they would be flipped onto their stomach to improve oxygenation. This task would take up to four nurses, and the patient would be temporarily disconnected from machinery and medication, then quickly reconnected once stable.

“At 10:30 a.m., the snack cart came around, and this was truly the best part of my day,” Brown said. “I never thought I would be so excited to see a granola bar in my life. I was too anxious in the mornings before work to eat breakfast, so this was a treat.”

After his break, Brown would check on all of his patients and draw blood for new lab examinations. He would balance taking doctors’ orders and finding time for families to FaceTime their sick loved ones, all while hoping his N95 mask kept a solid seal to protect him from the virus. After 7 p.m., Brown would give his report to the next nurse and tell them about everything that had happened that day. He would walk home to his apartment on the Upper East Side by Central Park, call his parents and try not to think about his work day for the rest of the night.

“After each shift, I always felt like I forgot something or didn’t do enough for the patient,” Brown said. “[I felt like] maybe I made a mistake that might have literally caused someone to die. I would get to my apartment after 8 p.m., clean up and hope that I disinfected everything to keep myself safe, and I would usually find something funny to watch on TV before I went to bed to distract my busy mind.”

In August 2020, Brown became a travel nurse at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona when the state was at its peak number of COVID-19 cases. He jumped right into the same type of nursing position as in New York City, with more time to balance his schedule. He is more familiar with the hospital system due to his time with the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota.

Brown witnessed the beginning of the pandemic in Italy and remembers warning his parents about what was going to happen in America. He saw the strain of the virus in New York hospitals and predicted the same thing to happen in Arizona before the holiday season. The Arizona Mayo

Clinic was stretched thin through New Year’s Eve due to the public letting their guard down surrounding the coronavirus.

Senior nursing major Audrey Beth Tillman has witnessed several cases of COVID-19 throughout the last year. Tillman is currently doing her clinical rotations at Unity Health Hospital in Searcy and Baptist Health Medical Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. Tillman said she believes it takes courage, determination and selflessness to be a floating registered nurse in places like New York City during the pandemic.

“The nurses who floated to New York left their families and homes to work in the biggest hotspot of infection in the middle of a pandemic,” Tillman said. “To me, this demonstrates that the nurses who went to NYC cared more about taking care of patients who needed them and assisting other nurses who were running out of resources than themselves.”

Junior Seth Sims studied abroad in Florence last spring with Brown. During his time in Florence, Sims said he saw Brown as an approachable authority figure he felt comfortable confiding in.

“Ethan was really impressive to me because he made an intentional mission to get to know the ins and outs of everybody that was on the trip,” Sims said. “Regardless of [whether] he clicked with them or not, he dove into different friend groups and really made a point of making himself available.”

Working every day throughout the pandemic makes the hardship of being an ICU nurse worth it, Brown said. He is able to meet the needs of others with talents not many people possess. Fear of the unknown has always been a struggle for Brown, but he advocates for others to set aside their fears and seek discomfort.

“I have learned so much about myself in the last year,” Brown said. “As a person, I learned that I can do things that seem impossible if I change my mindset and rely on God to shift my perspective and lead me where he needs me. As a nurse, I gained a lot of confidence in myself to be able to deal with stressful situations, to multitask and to advocate for my patients with the knowledge I have. As a Christian, I learned more about the perfect timing of God, the love of Christ, and I really felt the community of Christ support me during my journey.”



Reflecting on one year li

'Why did it have to be us?': Study abroad canceled

Everett Kirkman

I don't think it really hit me until I was on the plane. I couldn't sleep. I dozed off for a minute or two at a time, but I hadn't actually slept for about two days. My mind was racing — it just didn't seem real. Why me? Why our trip? Everyone else was still at school on campus, or in Greece or Peru. Why did it have to be us? It



wasn't fair.

When I finally got home, I showered and unpacked, closed my eyes and woke up 15 hours later in the exact same position.

That's when it started becoming real — I was in quarantine. A week before that, I didn't even know what that meant.

I was one of the first people in Arkansas — or even the country — to quarantine because of COVID-19.

I got interviewed by a couple of news channels, and I was happy to talk about my experience.

But, as I would explain how I was feeling or what I went through on the trip home, I realized I didn't actually know. I knew what words I should say on camera, or how to talk about it all positively, but I had no idea how I actually felt. It felt like I was in limbo. I still had not actually processed it. So many of my friends were at the beach or hiking in the mountains for spring break — I was stuck in my childhood bedroom.

People I didn't even know were afraid of me. I was told I was selfish for "bringing the virus back." I was told I was irresponsible for coming back to Searcy. I was surely going to infect the whole state with this mysterious virus, even though I was in solitude and COVID-free the whole time.

I thought things would get better, but as soon as my 14 days were up, the whole country shut down. My next few months were monotonous. Every day felt the same as the last.

I spent a lot of time in my own head. I'm not very good at intentionally processing my emotions or slowing down at all. I was forced to rest during that season. I had to sit in the hurt, the loss and the heartbreak that continued to wreak havoc across the world and throughout the personal lives of people I hold closest.

I had to learn how to be still. I thought about the beautiful art and architecture I had seen during my short time in Italy. I

thought about the wonderful people on my trip I got to know better, and I thought a lot about God and his creation. I thought about my own life and how fleeting it is. I missed Italy — I still do. I long to go back, but for now, I'm right here.

The Everett writing this is much more of an individual than the Everett of a year ago. I've slowly learned that it's OK to do things by yourself, it's OK to do things for yourself, and it's OK to be quiet and listen to your spirit.

Losing senior year of high school

Tiane Davis

I was a senior in high school last year, and I was pretty much tired of my senior year as soon as it started. I suppose every other high school senior from last year would tell you they were robbed of what should have been the best year of their life, but I'm the kid that'll tell you I wasn't robbed at all.

To be clear, this isn't me pretending to have a positive attitude about all of this. This is me telling you that I had come to loathe high school so much that I was content to go home and hide in my room for two weeks when the lockdown started.

Later on, when I was told



the rest of my high school senior year would be canceled and that I might not have a real graduation, I honestly tried to be sad, but deep down, I was glad that it was over. It definitely came as a shock, but I had been ready for a change for so long that it came as a relief to cut it all a few months short.

It's easy, when you're close to the end of a certain chapter in your life, to skip over it so you can move on to the next story line. That's how I was my senior year. I was so ready to move on that I had begun to hate every part of it. The pandemic gave me a chance to wipe out every piece of negativity I had about high school, even though I didn't really deserve to.

Although there were plenty of exciting things I wasn't able to do because of COVID-19, I was able to take a break from everything and focus on areas of my life that I had begun to ignore. Instead of stressing myself out over homework, exams and sports, I got the chance to focus on my spiritual and mental health. I learned to appreciate nature and music a little more. I learned how to love myself and others at a deeper level.

In retrospect, I would have loved for my senior year of high school to have played out differently, but that is how I'm sure most of us feel about 2020. For the moment, I am

here, I have grown and I am grateful for where I am.

With every low, there was a high: Freshman year cut short

Emma Jones

I think we can all agree that 2020 was a roller coaster of a year, in both good and bad ways. Leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic that sent us home last March, my freshman year had already been pretty tumultuous. After spring break, my year continued to be crazy, but with every low that came for me, there was a high that went along with it.

During the fall of my freshman year, I went through the club process and didn't end up making it in a club, but I had some awesome opportunities during Club Week, including joining the newspaper staff and taking a ride on the Harding private jet. A few weeks later, us Cathcart Hall girls were told that we had a very short time frame to move out of our current room and find housing in a different dorm. My roommate and I ended up tucked away in a corner of Stephens Hall in a room that didn't get any natural light, which was a big adjustment from our previous front lawn view. I gained weight because of the Yarnell's ice cream bar in the cafeteria (R.I.P.) but I also was gaining some lifelong friendships.

Overall, by the time my freshman year spring break rolled around, it was shaping up to be a pretty good year.

When I received the news that we wouldn't be returning to Harding to finish the spring semester, I was pretty upset, as I'm sure all of you were. I had been practicing to do Spring Sing with women's social club Pi Theta Phi, and I loved the people I was meeting and the energy and excitement that everyone involved had for the upcoming show. It was disheartening to think that all that practice wouldn't be put to use. I was also disappointed that I was facing six months of a long-distance relationship with my boyfriend, as well as being a long drive from most of my friends from school. I did my best to stay caught up in my online classes but found that I struggled to learn from and pay attention to classes that came through my computer screen.

Over the summer, I worked two jobs because I was saving up to travel abroad on Harding's Australasia trip during the fall 2020 semester. When the trip got canceled mid-summer, I was left trying to quickly arrange housing in Searcy and to register for different classes. My trip getting canceled was probably the moment it hit me that COVID-19 was probably going to be around for a while and that there was no telling what other plans in my life it was going to interrupt. That realization helped me mature spiritually with my ability to hand over control to God because it became clear that I never really know what's going to happen with my plans.

Though it wasn't Australia, I was incredibly happy to return to Searcy in August last fall. Some restrictions may have changed how we interact, but I am still so grateful that we had the opportunity to come back and be a part of the Harding community that we all love.

Lejos de casa: Stuck in Searcy as my home country for 16 months

Jair Lopez

Recuerdo ese jueves 12 de marzo, a tan solo un par de días de terminar nuestras vacaciones de primavera me encontraba hospedado en el hogar de una familia en Searcy, cuando todos recibimos un correo en el que se nos pedía no regresar al campus.

Durante esos días, las noticias dejaban ver que la pandemia ya representaba un potencial riesgo en Latinoamérica. Se hablaba de las estrictas medidas que muchos países estaban tomando frente al nuevo virus. Cuando la universidad informó la suspensión de actividades académicas presenciales, la mayoría de estudiantes internacionales empezaron a agendar vuelos para regresar a sus países. En El Salvador, todas las personas que entraban al país necesitaban someterse a una cuarentena estricta en centros de albergue antes de entrar al territorio. En aquel momento mi mejor opción era quedarme en mi dormitorio y esperar que el manejo de pasajeros se agilizará en mi país. Unos cuantos días después, a pesar de no tener ningún caso, el gobierno salvadoreño anunció cuarentena total, cierre de fronteras y aeropuertos. Durante los primeros días algo me decía que la situación solo duraría unas pocas semanas y que todos podrían regresar para terminar el semestre normalmente o que podría ir a casa. Pero a medida que las semanas pasaban, la gestión sanitaria no parecía mejorar, el número de casos aumentaba, y crecía la incertidumbre de no poder estar con mi familia por un largo tiempo.

Gracias a las autoridades de la universidad y al programa de becas del que soy parte, pude hospedarme en campus, terminar mi semestre de primavera en línea y aun tomar cursos durante el verano. Después de mayo, el campus parecía realmente un desierto. Viendo atrás pareciera que el tiempo paso volando, pero en realidad fueron alrededor de cinco meses viviendo en un campus prácticamente vacío. Solo acompañado de unos cuantos estudiantes internacionales que se encontraban en mi misma situación.

Fue agradable ver como todos regresaban en otoño. Y a pesar de las incontables restricciones, había esperanza de recuperar un poco la normalidad. No fue hasta agosto de 2020 que El Salvador tuvo una reapertura total y los aeropuertos normalizaron su actividad. A mediados del semestre, recibí la noticia que viajaría a casa para pasar mis vacaciones de navidad. No hay palabras para describir lo emocionante que fue ver a mi familia y abrazarlos después de casi dieciséis meses después.

La pandemia representó una etapa de crecimiento personal para mi dónde aprendí la importancia de adaptarse situaciones no tan agradables, y a ser agradecido con Dios. Modifiqué mi rutina, desarrollé nuevos hábitos, y trabajé áreas de mi vida en las que solo hubiera podido enfocarme en una temporada de "pausa" como la que estábamos viviendo.



Living through COVID-19

way from

I still remember that Thursday, just a few days before spring break was over: I was staying with a family in Searcy, when every student received an email asking us not to return to campus. During previous weeks, the news showed how the pandemic already represented a potential problem for Latin American countries. Many nations started to call for strict and even radical measures against the new virus. When the University informed us about the suspension of academic activities on campus, the great majority of international students started scheduling flights and getting ready to go back to their home countries.

El Salvador established in early March that every person arriving to the country needed to go through a strict quarantine in temporary “containment centers.” My best alternative at the moment was to stay in my dorm and wait for the passenger handling to improve. A few days later, despite not having any COVID-19 cases yet, the Salvadoran government announced the imposition of a national quarantine and the closure of borders and airports. At that moment, something was telling me that the situation would only last a few weeks and that everybody would be able to return to campus and finish the semester or that, at least, I would be able to go home soon. But as the days passed, the health management didn't seem to get better, and the number of cases kept rising in my



country. There was so much uncertainty, along with the growing sensation that I would not be able to see my family for a long time.

Thanks to the University and my scholarship program, I was able to stay in the dorms, finish my spring semester online and even take some summer courses. After May, the whole campus certainly appeared deserted, except for the presence of some staff, people working on remodeling and some other international students that were in the same situation as me. Looking back, it seems like the days went by so fast, but in reality, it was around five months living in a quiet and almost empty campus.

It was so nice to see people coming back for the fall semester. Despite the many social distancing restrictions, there seemed to be hope to get back some of the old normalcy. It was not until August that El Salvador reopened and airport activity started to normalize. We were halfway through the semester when I knew I would be able to fly back to spend Christmas break at home. I still have no words to describe how exciting it was to hug my family after about 16 months since the last time I had seen them. Last summer, the pandemic, for me, was a growing season where I learned the importance of adapting and being thankful to God, even in situations in life that do not seem so nice. There were a lot of changes in my routines; I had to develop new habits, but I also had the chance to work on areas of my life that I would have only been able to focus on during a “pause season” like the one we all lived last year.

Being a senior in college during a pandemic: ‘We’re all facing uncertainty together’

Katelyn Allen

When the pandemic disrupted my junior year, I was actually relieved to get a break from the semester. The spring semester of 2020 was one of my hardest semesters academically, and I hadn't yet fully comprehended the devastating impact COVID-19 would have on the world. It wasn't until I was home, alone and isolated from friends and my normal routine, when it hit me that my college experience would never be the same.

The unknown is what I fear the most. I get anxious when the future is unsure, and I feel like I have to know exactly what is going to happen. I'm the type of person who reads the plot to a movie or TV show when things start to take a turn for the worse. I usually end up spoiling the best parts of the story, but I can't help it. Since I couldn't read ahead on the unfolding events of 2020, I waited impatiently and anxiously for clarity.

When the murder of George Floyd played on our smartphones, a lot of people hit their breaking point, including me. One after another, stories of men and women of color being assaulted flooded my social media, and I was doing everything I could to keep up. I felt, and still feel, the overwhelming guilt of knowing I had hurt so many Black men and women through my apathetic actions and ignorant conversations. One thing I know for sure is that the pandemic left me feeling angry and lost in who I was going into the year 2020 and who I was coming out of it.

Being a senior in college has been tough, especially jumping through the fiery hoops of the last year. Heightened fear, anger and confusion have torn a lot of people apart on the inside. When I look at pictures of life before masks and social distancing, I hardly recognize the girl in the photos. That girl was determined to graduate college with a degree in journalism and change the world, and now I feel burnt out from a year of reading about the newest conspiracies and political nightmares.

The best part of the last year has been the people who have consistently pushed me to better myself. Jackson Duncan started a sports podcast to remain active during a 9-month quarantine and inspired me to stay productive in my field of study. Dr. Jack Shock has always posted the most wholesome content on his Facebook and has inspired me to look at the positive when life can be cynical. Raissa Ames posted credible sources of information throughout the last year and encouraged me to stay educated on current events and new perspectives.

Being a senior, during a pandemic or not, guarantees the fear of the unknown. Searching for jobs can get tiring, classes can get repetitive and routine can get old, but the unknown after graduation is always there. Although the last year was a difficult

year for everyone, we're going to come out stronger because we're facing our fears head on. I can't simply ignore the uncertainty of the future — I have to have faith that we will be OK eventually.

No, I can't read ahead on the plot of the coming year.

year's summer incidents were no different, only this time, the world was forced to stop, look and listen to the lesson that people of color have been trying to educate others on, which is one that says, “All men might be created equally, but all men are not being treated equally.”



but I can remember lessons I've learned and continue to grow. I can forge my own path and embrace the unknown. I can continue to look up to others and challenge myself to be better than the person I was yesterday. Being a senior during the pandemic is really no different than what any other college student is going through, and that's really comforting. We're all facing uncertainty together.

My response to the real racial tension, riots and requests from 2020

Andrew Braxter

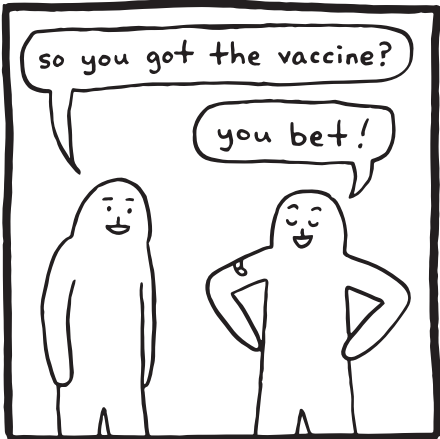
For the good majority of my life, I have been questioned about the various areas of my life: family life and upbringing, church life and ministry, school life and career goals, and cultural questions related to my race or ethnicity. Many of the questions have been manageable, but honestly, the questions about race, ethnicity and culture have been quite ignorant and borderline insulting.

For the past few years, I have tried to educate people in my circle about race relations and injustices that are happening all around us — some that will never make headlines but are still happening — even in a subtle way. Last

When I first learned of the brutal killing of George Floyd, my heart sank deep into my chest. I instantly said to myself, “Another brother is gone.” I started hearing the names of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, and instantly my anger turned into rage because these were senseless killings not only of Black people, but young Black people. I wondered, “When will this stop?” I wondered if I would be next. Would I die from the COVID-19 virus, or would I die from the virus that fears the color of my skin and my culture? I was fearful, frustrated and frantic, and in the midst of all of this, certain people wanted to ask me questions — foolish questions — about why I think these people died, and I was dumbfounded in disbelief.

I received calls from friends that do not share my same history as a man of color, telling me they could not believe things had gotten so bad, and my simple response was, “If you had listened to me from the beginning, perhaps this would not be our current reality.” They asked, “Can we pray?” Honestly though, I did not want to just pray. It was time to move from being prayer partners to active participants in order to make effective change. Enough talk had been done about why these things were being done; it was now time to ask the real question: “How can we keep this from happening again?”

THE VACCINE



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Alumni experience initial COVID-19 repercussions in Wuhan

SARA MCCLARAN
student writer

While many people in early 2020 only heard about the coronavirus outbreak in China through the news, a few Harding alumni were living in Wuhan, China, at that time and experienced firsthand some of the world’s initial lockdowns.

Alumni Allie Cook and Zee Rock, among other Harding alumni, got jobs in 2017 teaching English at universities in Wuhan, China. However, they had to return to the United States and teach online after COVID-19 restricted travel.

In China, the winter break is typically in January and February to observe the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival, so instead of being at home in Wuhan when the city went into lockdown last year, the alumni were in

the Sichuan province of China on vacation.

“The day that we left for vacation was Jan. 4, 2020, and that was the day that the first cases were actually reported ... for the public to know,” Cook said.

Wuhan closed down on Jan. 23, and Cook returned to the U.S. on Feb. 4, a month after she first left her home for the holidays.

“At the time, we really didn’t realize the gravity of the situation,” Cook said.

The Harding graduates continued with their vacation for nearly three-and-a-half weeks before things began to close down in other cities as well. Cook said they were kicked out of one hotel and almost weren’t allowed into another because their residence was listed as being in Wuhan.

“It’s very different than it is here in the states, right?” another Harding alumnus from Wuhan said. “When your government

issues a stay-at-home [order], you can still go out and shop and everything — but when it comes to ... China, it’s very different. When you’re caught in the public, people, I mean the authority, will put you in the jail for a few days and give you a big penalty.”

Cook came home in early February, but Rock stayed for a week longer.

“It was mid-February when I was starting to find it relatively impossible — or at the very least, ideal,” Rock said. “Impossible to stay in China for various reasons and [not] ideal to come back to America and try to wait out the situation. I wanted to stay, but it would have been incredibly difficult.”

About a month after the alumni came back to the U.S., some state and local governments began shutting down many parts of the country, as well.

“It was a lot more difficult than I thought it would be because I was like,

‘Well, I kind of already experienced this craziness of things locking down,’ but kind of having to start over with that again — it was ... really, really difficult, and it became even more difficult as things continued to be really horrible here and seeing things improve specifically in Wuhan,” Cook said.

Rock had a slightly different response to seeing the beginning of a lockdown again.

“It was just a big feeling of disappointment because, not only were we the most well-prepared, but when everything started going down, everyone was giving terrible advice,” Rock said. “The average person thought that they could, you know, elevate themselves above common sense.”

Both Rock and Cook plan to return to Wuhan as soon as COVID-19 restrictions subside so they can to continue teaching in person.

Graphic by Avery Tillett



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Soda Jerk:
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Tues - Thurs 7:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Fri 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Sat 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.



HU VAX Facts presents:

COVID-19 VACCINE EDUCATIONAL PANEL

The HU VAX Facts team will partner with panelists Dr. Julie Hixson-Wallace, Dr. Landry Kamdem, Dean of Students Zach Neal, and molecular and cellular biology student Alyson White on Thursday, April 22, at 2:30-4p.m. on the Midnight Oil stage.

This discussion aims to inform the Harding community about the COVID-19 vaccine and answer common questions, misconceptions and everything in between. We hope to enable people to make educated and confident decisions regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

This event will be free and open to the public.

Learn more by following @huvaxfacts on Instagram.